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1. What kind of preparation did you undergo (for example language preparation, if any)?

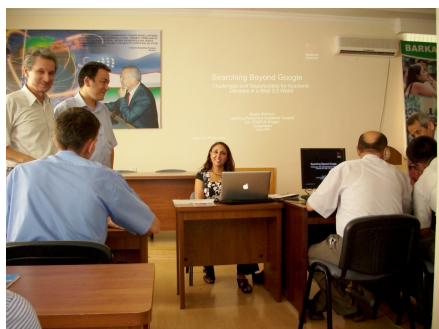
Three specially prepared presentations were given to demonstrate the changing role of librarians and the current information landscape in the UK, the ways in which Web 2.0 has affected how we promote and communicate with our students and also the challenges associated with providing a library service to the 'Google Generation', i.e. library users born after 1992.

This required background reading and research and considerable time copying screens in case I did not have Internet access to show live examples. (30 hours) I was glad I did have the screen images as I did not have live Internet access in any of the centres.

I also took with me examples of newsletters that I had worked on with academic staff at Middlesex University to demonstrate how librarians can collaborate with teaching staff to promote resources and the various reports on information seeking behaviours (CIBER reports available at www.ucl.ac.uk/infostudies/research/ciber/downloads) and use of Web 2.0 in teaching and learning ('Higher Education in a Web 2.0 World' available from www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/documents/heweb2.aspx) that has been published recently. These were left with Professor Marat Rakhmatullaev and duplicate material was given to staff who were interested. I also took with me posters illustrating the research on information seeking behaviour that I was involved in at Middlesex University (see: www.slideshare.net/Nazlin1/invisque_poster and www.slideshare.net/Nazlin1/ubird-poster).

In addition to this preparation, I also did more general preparation, researching Uzbekistan, buying a guide book and a Russian phrase book to prepare me for my travels. I also looked up the websites of the library and read the TEMPUS project documentation.

2. What kind of activities did you perform during your stay?



I gave three presentations and participated in a roundtable discussion in Tashkent, one presentation in Samarkand and one in Bukhara – each geared to the specific audience. In each case I asked my hosts how long they would like me to talk and what experience the librarians had which enabled me to customise the presentations to suit the audience.

In my presentations, I spoke about the challenges and opportunities presented to librarians, how Web 2.0 is used and explained the changing role of the information professional explaining how a new breed of librarian is emerging, one that is both information expert, marketing expert and a teacher. Further, the importance of information literacy (and digital literacy in the Web 2.0 environment) was highlighted in my presentations. I used Middlesex University where I work as a case study to explain how UK librarians are combating the serious issues raised by the lack of literacy and, in particular, information literacy and the perception of users that the Internet is the only electronic library.

In Bukhara, I gave the Vice-Director, Ms. Zevar Salimova, an additional presentation on free web resources as she asked me many questions about the free academic resources available on the Internet.



I was taken on a tour of the University of Tashkent Cultural Institute including the library and also on library tours in Samarkand and in Bukhara. In both libraries, I was shown the extensive collections including the archive and special book collections. In Bukhara, I saw both the Central Information Centre and the children's library which is housed in the Old Town in a 19th century historic madrassa (school building). I was impressed with the dedication of the librarians and the fact that the libraries were open on Sunday to cater to the needs of younger

students who used the library for studying. During the visits, I got a chance to meet the rectors, vice-rectors and the deans of the various faculties. There were not too many teaching staff in on the days I was at the institutions as my visit fell during their summer vacation.

The visits have given me the opportunity to begin to understand how libraries function in Uzbekistan and also the challenges Uzbek libraries and librarians face – lack of funding, updated library facilities/buildings and computers. I was shown a presentation on the Cultural Institute's refurbishment programme and given a copy of this presentation on CD.



It was also interesting to hear about the preferences some librarians have to using Dewey rather than the Russian classification system. Many are looking forward to the implementation of an Uzbek automated library information system which is being developed by a team of staff led by the Pro-rector Shukhrat Kayumov at the Cultural Institute in Tashkent and which I was shown on my visit to the Institute.

3. What were the results of your activities (e.g. curriculum development and teaching materials) and how will the stay affect your activities at your home institution?



Although no formal evaluation procedures were carried out, I feel confident in saying that my activities in informing librarians and academics in Uzbekistan about the challenges and opportunities presented to libraries in the rapidly changing information world of today were successful. In addition, the presentations highlighted the use and promotion of electronic resources, the information literacy debate in an information rich society and the importance of collaboration between academics/researchers and librarians in formulating user education in

HE institutions and prioritising information needs. What was emphasized, as well, was the changing role of the information professional – it was important not only for

librarians to be familiar with new Web 2.0 technologies but also to be good at marketing, networking and running libraries like non-profit organisations/businesses in order to survive the competition generated by the Internet.

I believe I gave many librarians and managers ideas for their own professional development and I hope they will address the key issues to do with web literacy (the critical evaluation of web resources) in all types of libraries. Certainly, many of them were surprised at how librarians collaborate with teaching staff in the UK to embed information literacy into the curriculum and this holistic approach is to be recommended. In Samarkand and Bukhara, my talk was aligned more to the importance of school and public libraries and the emphasis again was on the importance of promoting the value of libraries to the development of information literacy skills and not just on the role of libraries as keepers of information and archives. This was because I knew that the librarian in charge of the children's library was in the audience.

Of equal importance, was the information I gathered about Uzbek libraries and a better understanding of the challenges they face. Some libraries in Samarkand and Bukhara have received gifts by various embassies to supplement their meagre purchasing abilities as purchasing budgets are very low and do not allow for the purchase of foreign language materials. The libraries are keen to develop their English language collections.

4. How would you evaluate your stay (quality, suggestions, problems?)



I would say my stay was a success and that the presentations were well received. I am not sure how many librarians were aware of the New Masters in Library Science TEMPUS project outside of Tashkent. I took the opportunity I could to publicise this and began each of my presentations in Samarkand and Bukhara by talking about the project. Two librarians in Bukhara (Zevar Salimova and Mirshod Khaitor) are very keen to participate on this project. Mirshod has a degree in English and currently works at the library and Zevar

Salimova is the Deputy Director and has a lot of experience. I was impressed by Ms Salimova's enthusiasm and her knowledge of resources on the Internet. She teaches cataloguing and classification at the University on a part-time basis. I was able to share another presentation with her and we have agreed to keep in touch by email.

The librarians and academic staff were receptive to my talk and were very interested in how the British Library have researchers on staff to inform the library on which



items to prioritise for digitisation. I mentioned the British Library's 'Turning the Pages' project in the context of widening access. The librarians were very interested in the ways in which UK HE librarians promote e-resources and the ways in which we are harnessing Web 2.0 and moving into the social networking sphere. I only wish I had Internet access during these presentations as I think those present would have benefitted from seeing more examples. I could only show them screen-shots/images of websites

I had on my presentations.

It is clear that there is not being able to get fast Internet connection does deter librarians from being able to access good resources. I was delighted to hear from Aziza Abdurakhmanova, the Tempus Programme Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan about the new high-speed broadband being set up in Central Asia. This will allow Uzbek libraries

to share best practice and resources with their Western counterparts and to exchange information.

The lack of funding for ongoing training, the status of the librarian and library education as well as opportunities for continuous professional development must be considered on a longer-term. I have been told that there are 20,000 library workers and only 2,000 of them are trained, many of them in the old Soviet systems.

I was deeply touched by the care and reception I received whilst in Uzbekistan by all my hosts and in particular, Professor Marat Rakhmatullaev (TUIT and Tashkent Institute for Culture), Mrs Shakhodat Akhmedova, Director of the A.S. Pushkin Regional Information Centre in Samarkand, Director Mrs Mamlakat Samadova and Deputy Director Ms Zevar Salimova of the Abu Ali Ibn Sina Regional Information Centre in Bukhara. The student guides (Iskander in Tashkent, Feroze, Arthur and Ulugbek in Samarkand and Mirshod Kaitov [library employee] in Bukhara were exceptional and I very much appreciated their translation services. I not only learnt about student life in Uzbekistan and the ambitions of these young people but also was able to share my experiences with them as well.

It was unfortunate that my visit coincided with the vacation period as I would have liked to meet more of the staff and visited more libraries to get a fuller picture of the needs. I know that if I had known about the development of the new library system, I would have had more examples of how Web 2.0 and Ajax technology is being used by libraries in the UK to develop vertical search engines. I would certainly have talked more about the development of user driven desktop services and the debate of these impacting current and future Library Management Systems.

5. Do you intend to follow-up activities performed?



I have provided links to Middlesex University Learning Resources which will allow colleagues in Uzbekistan to update themselves on developments at a UK HE institution.

Potential ongoing development work in the area of work based distance learning for Uzbek librarians is something I am looking at in consultation with Professor Marat

On a less formal basis, I will attempt to maintain contact with some of the librarians I have met and we have shared information relevant to the topic of my presentations. I would like to write to UK publishers to request remainder stock to be sent to Uzbekistan libraries as I know that the library users and staff would like and benefit from the English language material. I have also requested if Alan Hopkinson can meet with suppliers on behalf of the project for this purpose. I would also like to approach organisations such as the Early Learning Centre to donate material for the creation of toy libraries in Bukhara. This is something that the librarian there is keen on establishing but because of the lack of funds is not able to take forward.

I hope that I am able to continue contributing to the EU-Tempus NMLS project in a positive way and am happy to contribute my presentations and relevant interesting materials I come across in my own professional development.

Nazlin Bhimani
September 2009